

Statues of Abraham Lincoln

Joan Fitzgerald

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



Abe Lincoln and the Great Statue Shuttle

By Judith Martin

A bronze Lincoln, like a bad penny, keeps showing up at the National Cathedral, and nobody knows what to do with it.

A 9-foot, several-ton, finished figure of Abraham Lincoln, which the Cathedral's building committee has now rejected in several stages of development, stood in the Cathedral's Lincoln Bay yesterday, waiting to be crated up and sent to wherever the artist says she wants it. On the wall behind it are carved the words of Lincoln's farewell in Springfield: "No one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feelings of sadness at this parting. To this place and the kindness of these people, I owe everything . . ."

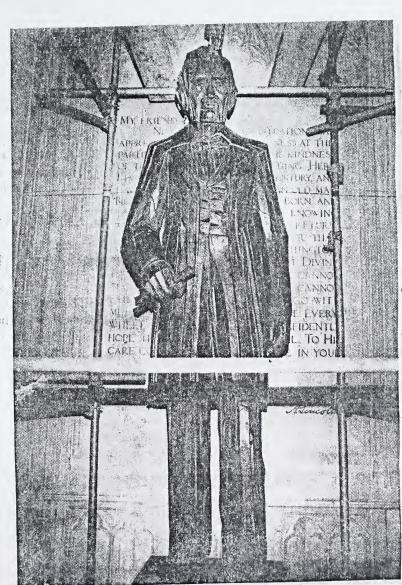
Who first approached whom about Joan Fitzgerald's doing a sculpture of Lincoln for the Cathedral is not clear. But the artist, an American who lives in Venice, has submitted to the Cathedral:

- a 1/3 scale model of the head, mounted on eight feet of plywood.
- a ½ scale model of the full figure in plaster.
- a 1/3 scale model of the full figure in bronze.
- the full-fledged, finished product.

As each model came before the committee, it failed to be accepted. At one time, the committee expressed "a willingness to cooperate with the artist in her revisions," and even commissioned the plaster model, but the work was, each time, ultimately rejected.

However, there it is, right where the artist wanted it, in the Lincoln Bay. For the moment, at any rate.

"The artist got stubborn and kept on pestering us, and there was pressure on us," said the Assistant Clerk of the Works, John Fanfani. It was apparently this un-





specified "pressure" that made the committee agree to pay the expense of shipping the statue. But they said "shipping." Fitzgerald sent the statue to them by air, and the Cathedral is now offering to pay only that part of the expense equivalent to sea costs. No one would disclose the actual cost.

A spokesman, who says there is nothing different about this transaction than in a dozen or so previous rejections of other Lincoln statues by other artists, would only acknowledge that the committee "did not have the type of budget" to transport around the world tons of bronze it knew in advance it didn't want.

Meanwhile, the bronze head she had sent at first was purchased by a Washington collector, Gilbert Kinney. (Fitzgerald is also represented in Washington by a bronze bust of Ezra Pound at the National Portrait Gallery and a sculpture of the first moon walk, owned but not currently exhibited, by the Air and Space Museum.)

Her friends in town, led by Ellen Barry, widow of playwright Philip Barry ("The Philadelphia Story"), are hoping someone in town will buy the 9-foot statue and perhaps donate it to some other institution, so that it won't have to be sent back.

The 9-foot bronze statue of Lincoln at the National Cathedral: "waiting to be crated up and sent to wherever the artist says she wants it."

Photo By Gerald Martineau
—The Washington Post



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